

REMARKS

Applicants respectfully request reconsideration of the present application in view of the foregoing amendments and in view of the reasons that follow.

Status of Claims:

Claims 5 and 16-19 are currently being cancelled (claims 16-19 were withdrawn from consideration, whereby Applicants reserve the right to prosecute those claims in a divisional application, if so desired).

Claims 1, 6 and 7 are currently being amended.

Claims 20-23 are being added.

This amendment adds, cancels and amends claims in this application. A detailed listing of all claims that are, or were, in the application, irrespective of whether the claims remain under examination in the application, is presented, with an appropriate defined status identifier.

After adding, canceling and amending the claims as set forth above, claims 1-4, 6-15 and 20-23 are now pending in this application.

Request for Acknowledgement of All References Cited in IDSs:

Initialed copies of the PTO SB/08 forms that were included with an IDS filed on November 4, 2004, and an IDS filed on June 22, 2004, were included with the Office Action. However, it is noted that the Examiner did not provide his initials besides reference A1 submitted with the June 22, 2004 IDS, and the references B1-B3 submitted with the November 4, 2004 IDS. Each of these non-considered references corresponds to a U.S. patent, which should have been considered by the Examiner. It is respectfully requested that initialed copies of the PTO SB/08 forms, with each reference provided with the Examiner's initials, be included in the next PTO correspondence.

Indication of Allowable Subject Matter:

Applicants appreciate the indication of allowable subject matter made in the Office Action with respect to claims 5-7 and 10-15. By way of this amendment and reply, presently pending independent claim 1 has been amended to include the features of claim 5 (slightly rewritten without affecting the scope of those features), and thus claim 1 is now believed to

be in allowable form (based on the indications made in the Office Action with respect to claim 5), whereby certain features of claim 1 which are not believed necessary for patentability of that claim have been deleted. Claims 2-4 and 6-15 depend either directly or indirectly from claim 1, and thus those claims are also now believed to be in allowable form.

Claim Rejections – Prior Art:

In the Office Action, claims 1-4 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 6,933,479 to Tanaka et al; and claims 8 and 9 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Tanaka et al. in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,725,000 to Takagi et al. Due to the amendment made to presently pending independent claim 1 to now include the features of ‘objected to’ claim 5, these rejections are now moot.

New Claims:

New claims 20-23 have been added, whereby these new claims are believed to patentably distinguish over the cited art of record. In particular, new independent claim 20 incorporates certain (but not all) features of original claims 1, 3 and 14, whereby this claim is believed to be allowable based on the indications made in the Office Action with respect to ‘objected to’ claim 14. New claim 21, which depends from claim 20, incorporates a feature of original claim 13, and thus this claim is allowable based on the indications made in the Office Action with respect to ‘objected to’ claim 13 as well as due to its dependence on claim 20. New claim 22, which depends from claim 21, is patentable due to the statements made above with respect to claims 20 and 21, as well as for the specific features recited in that claim. Lastly, new independent claim 23 incorporates certain (but not all) features of original claims 1, 3 and 13, whereby this claim is believed to be allowable based on the indications made in the Office Action with respect to ‘objected to’ claim 13.

Conclusion:

Since all of the issues raised in the Office Action have been addressed in this Amendment and Reply, Applicants believe that the present application is now in condition for allowance, and an early indication of allowance is respectfully requested.

The Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned by telephone if it is felt that a telephone interview would advance the prosecution of the present application.

The Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge any additional fees which may be required regarding this application under 37 C.F.R. §§ 1.16-1.17, or credit any overpayment, to Deposit Account No. 19-0741. Should no proper payment be enclosed herewith, as by a check being in the wrong amount, unsigned, post-dated, otherwise improper or informal or even entirely missing, the Commissioner is authorized to charge the unpaid amount to Deposit Account No. 19-0741. If any extensions of time are needed for timely acceptance of papers submitted herewith, Applicants hereby petition for such extension under 37 C.F.R. §1.136 and authorize payment of any such extensions fees to Deposit Account No. 19-0741.

Respectfully submitted,

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